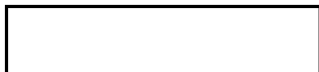


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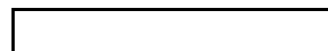
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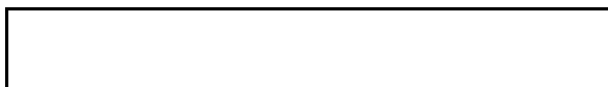


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State Department review
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

South Vietnamese Political Developments: It appears that the military leaders have tentatively decided to accept the resignations of the seven pro-southern cabinet ministers.

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Ky may take a final action on the status of the dissident southerners in the next day or two.

The ministers resubmitted their resignations to the government leaders on 17 October. At least two of the ministers reportedly have received threatening phone calls in the past few days. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] these threats presumably touched off their latest complaint to Ky. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

USSR: The gathering of top East European, Cuban, and Mongolian Communists in Moscow represents a tactical victory for the USSR in its offensive against China.

Attendance by leaders of nine ruling Communist parties gives substance to Moscow's claim that Peking's foreign and domestic policies have met virtually unanimous censure. Soviet sources have privately stressed that problems with China will dominate the discussions and the Russian press has been playing anti-Chinese themes at a polemical pitch reminiscent of the Khrushchev era.

Moscow can point to the presence of Rumanian chief Ceausescu as an added gain. Bucharest in the past has been reluctant to attend such meetings. Ceausescu restated Rumania's opposition to open polemics only last week. He--and perhaps others--will resist if the Soviet leaders press for joint and explicit condemnation of China. An unconfirmed press report from Moscow states that Ceausescu refused yesterday to endorse a Soviet call for unanimous condemnation of Peking's "cultural revolution."

The meeting will almost certainly focus on Vietnam as the issue on which Peking is most vulnerable. The party leaders can be expected to reiterate their readiness to support Hanoi's war effort, and to decry--at least implicitly--China's refusal to cooperate. Moreover, in outspoken comments last week, Kosygin blamed Peking for continued "US aggression" in Vietnam, and Brezhnev hinted that China, "the only Socialist country bordering Vietnam," is continuing to harass the transshipment of Soviet military aid to North Vietnam.

The East European, Cuban, and Mongolian defense ministers are also now in Moscow. According to press sources the visitors have been invited later this week to witness rocket firings. They will probably be given the opportunity to observe launches of an unmanned earth satellite and an ICBM at the Tyuratam missile test center.

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Communist China: The ongoing struggle in the Peking leadership may be entering a critical stage.

According to press accounts, Chinese leaders neither spoke at nor reviewed a mammoth rally of more than a million Red Guards and other people gathered in Tienanmen square on 18 October. Mao Tse-tung, Defense Minister Lin Piao and other leaders arrived in a motorcade about mid-day, and drove by the crowd at about 20 miles per hour. The crowd, which had been waiting for about ten hours, was then informed that the rally was ended.

This is the fourth rally held in Peking during the past two months--or the fifth, including National Day. At previous meetings Lin Piao, Premier Chou En-lai, or both, made speeches. Those meetings--used to impart new momentum to the "cultural revolution"--were also occasions for displaying the new leadership team headed by Mao and Lin, which emerged in early August.

According to reports received from Peking during the past week, Red Guards have been using wall posters and leaflets to attack several officials who attended recent rallies. The British Embassy in Peking comments that the number and types of these posters suggest that the attacks were centrally directed.

The most prominent targets are Li Hsueh-feng, who was named in May to replace purged politburo member Peng Chen, and Liu Shao-chi, chief of state and Mao's party deputy until August. Even Wu Te, the acting mayor of Peking who presided over National Day celebrations in Peking on 1 October, has come under poster attack.

These signs of political tension and the unusual circumstances surrounding the 18 October rally suggest that division in the leadership is so great that at the last moment no agreement could be reached on who was to speak or what was to be said. [REDACTED]

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Laos: Military leader Kong Le has apparently been ousted from his command of the neutralist forces.

Following a meeting with rebellious subordinate officers on 16 October, where he was accused of wastefulness and a lack of proper leadership, Kong Le reportedly agreed to relinquish his authority and leave Laos. He arrived in Thailand by air on 17 October.

The next move by the rebels is not yet clear. There have been reports that some of Kong Le's subordinates had reached an agreement with rightist officers in the Lao armed forces to integrate the neutralist forces into the Royal Lao Army. The rebels were to retain their ranks and receive commands in the integrated structure.

No firm action is likely to be taken by either the neutralists or the rightists until Premier Souvanna Phouma returns to Laos on 1 November. For the time being, the neutralist forces will be technically under the command of Colonel Somphet, a long-time aide to Kong Le.

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Syria: Premier Zuayyin on 17 October reiterated the radical Baathist regime's determination to maintain close ties with the Soviet bloc, back liberation movements, and seek broader cooperation among the "progressive" Arab states. The cabinet reshuffle on 16 October reorganized economic ministries and brought several non-Baathist ministers into the government. Key positions, however, remain in Baathist hands. Despite its strong leftist bias, the government still appears unwilling either to make further concessions to the local Communists or to bring influential pro-Nasirists into the cabinet.

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Nigeria: The recent atrocities against Ibo tribesmen in the Northern region have hardened the attitude of the Ibo rulers of the East toward negotiating a new basis for maintaining the Nigerian union. Although Eastern military governor Ojukwu continues to profess interest in a loose confederation, he is under strong pressure from separatist-minded Ibos and appears increasingly reconciled to eventual secession. He is now threatening to boycott the constitutional talks, scheduled to resume on 24 October, unless all northern troops are removed from Lagos--a condition Supreme Commander Gowon cannot meet.

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